Unit Outline*

IREL2206

Workplace Relations

Semester 2, 2011
Campus Crawley

Unit Coordinator: Dr Janaka Biyanwila
Lecturer: Winthrop Professor Rob Lambert

Business School
www.business.uwa.edu.au

* This Unit Outline should be read in conjunction with the Business School Unit Outline Supplement available on the Current Students web site http://www.business.uwa.edu.au/students
Introduction

Welcome to Workplace relations. Dr Janaka Biyanwila is the unit Co-ordinator and tutors in the unit. Winthrop Professor Rob Lambert lectures in this unit. Rob’s research focuses on management and organizational change and consequent impacts on work, employment and society (families and communities). Political and economic policy changes over the past thirty years, which have promoted free trade and investment as the cornerstone of the economic strategy of nations, are a major force driving both public and private sector restructuring.

Over the past two decades Rob has conducted field research on these issues in Southern China, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and South Africa. This work is published in a wide range of leading international journals and books. His most recent book, Grounding Globalization: Labour in the Age of Insecurity was published by Blackwell, Oxford in July 2008 and is the required text for this unit. The book has won a prestigious scholarly award of the American Sociological Association’s labour studies section for 2009, being chosen above some thirty submissions from around the world.


Tom Barratt achieved a high distinction in his Honours year and has won a Doctoral Scholarship. His PhD research is grounded in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and explores the social consciousness and work experience of mining workers.

Rob’s contact details are: email: rob.lambert@uwa.edu.au

Dr Janaka Biyanwila: janaka.biyanwila@uwa.edu.au

Tom Barratt: thomas.barratt@uwa.edu.au

Unit content

Essentially, this is an employment relations unit which builds on the key concepts and issues raised in Foundations of Employment relations. At the heart of this unit is a focus on the experience of work in contemporary society for it is this experience which shapes the character of the employment relationship. We pose the question, what factors underpin this experience?

The Goal of the Unit

The unit’s goal is to provide you with a new understanding of the experience of contemporary work and the impacts of continuous organizational change on key types of work including white collar work in the financial sector, blue collar work in manufacturing and mining and unskilled precarious work. Indeed, we will argue that almost all work has now become highly precarious, from the high paid managerial sectors to unskilled work such as contract cleaners and other work activities, which are largely hidden and invisible to society. A fundamental goal of the unit is therefore to analyse the causes of this culture of global insecurity.
Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding of:

- The experience of work in the key fields of finance, manufacturing, mining and unskilled labour derived from a careful study of key theoretical concepts relevant to the experience of work and disciplined engagement with research based books, book chapters and articles capturing these experiences of work;

- The change dynamics of organizations in the global economy (organizational and work restructuring) and how this impacts on the experience of work;

- The rising tide of work insecurity across the globe and the factors underlying this stress and anxiety;

- Work as a site where common and sometimes conflicting interests are played out and how this dynamic reflects particular configurations of power relations within organizations and the wider society.

- Your own experiences of work through the survey and group discussion and how this experience connects with the literature and analysis in this unit

Educational principles and graduate attributes

The core educational principle underpinning the entire unit is the development of independent and critical thought. Many of you aspire to become managers in organisations. Managers should be leaders, not mere functionaries in the organization. To achieve this you need to develop the capacity to think critically and problem solve. You need to strengthen your ability to analyse existing structures, roles and behaviours as a key facet of your becoming a change agent, so as to enhance the way work is organised and decisions are made and implemented. Independent thought complements a second educational principle that I consider to be of paramount importance: relating and connecting your own work experience to the theory presented in the unit. This is why the work survey is such a critical component of the learning process.

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESPONSIBILITIES

Teaching and learning strategies

A key teaching and learning strategy in this unit is the integration of your own work experience with the theoretical concepts introduced whenever this is possible and relevant. The teaching strategy to advance this goal is embedded in Assignment one where you will work in small groups (See Assignment 1 for detail).

Teaching and learning evaluation

You may be asked to complete two evaluations during this unit. The Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) and the Students' Unit Reflective Feedback (SURF). The SPOT is optional and is an evaluation of the lecturer and the unit. The SURF is completed online and is a university wide survey and deals only with the unit. You will receive an email from the SURF office inviting you to complete the SURF when it is activated. We encourage you to complete the forms as your feedback is extremely important and can be used to make changes to the unit or lecturing style when appropriate.
There will be an in-house evaluation before the mid semester break to give you a chance to express your views so we can employ this feedback. The SPOT and SURF feedback at the end of semester will help to improve the unit for future years.

**Attendance**

Participation in class, whether it be listening to a lecture or getting involved in other activities, is an important part of the learning process, therefore it is important that you attend classes. More formally, the University regulations state that ‘to complete a course or unit students shall attend prescribed classes, lectures, seminars and tutorials’.

Participation in class, whether it be listening to a lecture or getting involved in other activities, is an important part of the learning process, therefore it is important that you attend classes. More formally, the University regulations state that ‘to complete a course or unit students shall attend prescribed classes, lectures, seminars and tutorials’. Where a student, due to exceptional circumstances, is unable to attend a scheduled class, they are required to obtain prior approval of the unit coordinator to be absent from that class. Any student absent from class without having had such absence approved by the unit coordinator may be referred to the faculty for advice and may be required to withdraw from the unit.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

We strongly advise students to regularly access their student email accounts. Important information regarding the unit is often communicated by email and will not be automatically forwarded to private email addresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit coordinator/lecturer</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>Dr Janaka Biyanwila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Janaka.biyawila@uwa.edu.au">Janaka.biyawila@uwa.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation hours:</strong></td>
<td>By appointment only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Lecture times:** | Monday 10.00-10.45am EYLT  
Tuesday 2.00-2.45pm EYLT |
| **Tutorial times & venues:** | Monday 11.00-11.45am BUSN:162  
Monday 1.00 -1.45pm BUSN G42  
Wednesday 11.00-11.45am SSEH: RGLT  
Thursday 12.00 – 12.45pm SSEH: RGLT |
| **Name:** | Winthrop Professor Rob Lambert |
| **Email:** | rob.lambert@uwa.edu.au |
| **Consultation hours:** | Tuesday 1-2pm |
**Lecture times:**
- Monday 10.00-10.45am EYLT
- Tuesday 2.00-2.45pm EYLT

**Tutor**

**Name:** Tom Barratt

**Email:** thomas.barratt@uwa.edu.au

**Consultation hours:** TBA

**Tutorial times & venues:**
- Tuesday 3.00 – 3.45pm BUSN:161
- Thursday 2.00 – 2.45pm GUILD SR2
- Thursday 3.00 – 3.45pm GUILD SR1

**TEXTBOOK(S) AND RESOURCES**

**Unit website**

http://www.webct.uwa.edu.au

**Required text(s)**


**Recommended text(s)**


Karl Polanyi (2001), *The Great Transformation*, Boston, Beacon Press. - available as an eBook through Course Materials Online


**Relevant Journals**

Antipode; Globalizations; Global Labour Journal; Work, Employment and Society; Journal of Industrial Relations; Labor and Industry. Check the library catalogue and also use Google.

**Additional resources and reading material**


Miller, A. Death of a Salesman

Polanyi, K. (1944), The Great Transformation: the political and economic origins of our time, Boston, Beacon Press.


Wells, J (2011) [Video Recording] The Company Men
# UNIT SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Tutorial topics</th>
<th>Independent activity (reading)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>No Tutorial</td>
<td>Review basic concepts relevant to understanding work. Power Point notes on social identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The social psychology of work: meaning &amp; security</td>
<td>Review tutorial topics, make choices Discuss work experience survey.</td>
<td>Erikson, Identity, Youth &amp; Crisis, ch.1. Power point notes on social identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Key concepts relevant to work experience</td>
<td>Insecurity &amp; Identity</td>
<td>Berger, ch.4,5. Grounding Globalization, preface &amp; chapter one, pp1-5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Global restructuring. The Corporation</td>
<td>Human experience of Work restructuring</td>
<td>Fromm, Man for Himself, pp 67-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Global Restructuring, public &amp; private The dynamic of work, employment &amp; society (markets and society)</td>
<td>Present work experience survey results.</td>
<td>Bakan, The Corporation: the pathological pursuit of profit and power, Ch.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Restructuring case studies (Chef &amp; Sunbeam) Work, Employment &amp; Society (family, community)</td>
<td>Contrasting experiences of the modern corporation</td>
<td>Lambert, Global Dance; Death of a Factory; Spaces of Hope: Fatalism, trade unionism, and the uneven geography of capital in white goods manufacturing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Case studies from Grounding Globalization. Three factories, three communities</td>
<td>Work, family &amp; society</td>
<td>Grounding Globalisation, Ch.5,6,7. The Company Men. DVD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>DVD The Company Men</td>
<td>Public sector work change</td>
<td>Grounding Globalization, Ch4, Leys, Market Driven Politics, Ch.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Experience of working on Wall St.</td>
<td>The experience of working on Wall St.</td>
<td>Read Ch.1,2 and 5 of the Ho book, Liquidated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Lecture Topic</td>
<td>Tutorial topics</td>
<td>Independent activity (reading)</td>
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</table>
| 10   | Experience of work under scientific management, Lean production, GPN & precarious work | Experience of work under scientific management | Beynon, Working for Ford, ch.5.  
Kamata, *Japan in the Passing Lane*  
(Not a long book, read as much as possible). |
| 11   | Experience of precarious work | Preparing for the exam. | Articles: Webster, *Growth & Organization of a Precariat*, Purser,  
Day Labor as a prism of precarity,  
Gulsom Coskun, Building Women’s homebased organizations, see online  
Aguilar & Herod, *The Dirty Work of Neo-liberalism*, ch.3. |
| 12   | The Dignity of Work |  | Sharon Bolton, *Dimensions of the Dignity of Work*, chapters to be advised by tutors |
| 13   | Unit review  
Preparing for the Exam. |  |  |

**Key Concepts**

Globalization; Neo-liberalism; global production networks; finance capital (investment banks, private equity); the state; economic deregulation; organizational restructuring; work restructuring; social interaction; social structure; social role; social position; social status; social identity; social power; work insecurity; scientific management; day labour; homework; sweatshop labour.

**Tutorials**

**Part One: Understanding Work**

1. **Week 2, Tutorial 1.** Allocation of tutorial topics. Question for discussion: What are your career aspirations? What motivates your choices?  
(Fill in handout on work experience. Return to tutor in week three).

2. **Week 3, Tutorial 2.** Insecurity & Identity.

   Erikson commented, ‘For indeed in the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity’. (*Identity, Youth and Crisis*, p.130).

   What does he mean ‘sense of identity’, and how relevant is this concept for analysing work experience, particularly the experience of insecurity, which is now so dominant across the globe?
Erikson E. (1968), Read the chapter on youth. Base your discussion on the lecture notes on work and identity. For an introduction to the question of work insecurity, read the Preface of Grounding Globalization (GG) and Ch.1, pp1-5,

**Part Two: Human impacts of Organizational Change (Restructuring of work)**

3. **Week 4, Tutorial 3. How do persons experience the restructuring of work**

Psychologist Eric Fromm analysed the human impacts of corporate restructuring. In this he identified a process whereby persons are reduced to the status of a commodity, a thing-like experience of the self.


In contrast to this negative experience of self, Fromm identifies the personality characteristics of what he calls, *The Productive Personality*, which is formed through positive experiences of work and society. Such an experience of self is based on persons developing the capacity to think, to imagine and to sustain loving relations (care, compassion and concern) for the wellbeing of the other.

There are two parts to the tutorial discussion. Firstly, exchange views on what Fromm meant by market personality and productive personality from what you have read. Secondly, share honestly, your own experiences of work – have you ever experienced feeling you were treated as a ‘thing to be shoved around’ (Polanyi)? Have you experienced work which is meaningful, where you were stretched mentally in a positive way?

4. **Week 5, Tutorial 4: Your work experience.**

Share your personal experiences of work by presenting and debating the conclusions of your report, which will be submitted on the 1st September.

5. **Week 6, Tutorial 5: Contrasting Perspectives on the Modern Corporation.**

Debate.

*Position A:*

Corporations are the foundation stone of the modern economy. These organizations create employment opportunities and socially useful commodities to enrich the lives of citizens across the globe. Corporations are also the driving force of technological innovation, which has created new horizons of opportunity. The sign of an under-developed economy is the absence of corporate investment.

*Position B:*

Corporations are indeed a primary force underpinning economic development across the globe. However, as Bakan argues, they are share-holder driven and this tends to limit the scope of their activity. Should questions therefore be raised regarding their social and environmental impacts? What do you think? Some contend that such issues are beyond the scope of concern of the corporation, whilst others contend corporations need to be accountable and responsible for their impacts in these spheres.
What are your views?

This debate is shaped by ethics. What do we mean by ethical considerations? What do we mean by personal, social and political values? Is a position of value neutrality sustainable? What do you think?

Bakan, The Corporation, Chapter 1; view documentary, The Corporation, on the corporation and labour issues. For the tutorial refer to one or the other. However, you should try to cover both before the exam.

6. **Week 7, Tutorial 6: Work, Family & Society**

In this tutorial we analyse and debate the relationship between work restructuring, employment and society (family and community).

Discuss the nature of this relationship and consider how insecurity is being manufactured. If you know of family and/or friends who have experienced work restructuring, introduce these experiences into the discussion.

Economic historian, Karl Polanyi was preoccupied with this relationship. Read the introduction to Polanyi’s book, The Great Transformation. (See eBook via course materials online) and read Chapter 5,6 and 7 of Grounding Globalization.

For a summary account of these research findings see Webster and Lambert’s account in *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol.52, No.5, in the article entitled, ‘Searching for Security’.

**Part Three: Different Types of Work**

7. **Week 8, Tutorial 7: Public Sector Transformation**

Privatization and corporatization of the public sector is a strategy of governments across the globe. This represents a significant change in organization of work, the state’s role and the character of the public interest.

What are the impacts of privatisation on work and employment relations? What is your evaluation of these changes?

GG, Chapter 4, Leys, Market Driven Politics, 2001, Chapter 1.

8. **Week 9, Tutorial 8: Working at Wall St.**

In her book Liquidated, Karen Ho analyses the work culture on Wall St, which, alongside the London Stock Exchange, represent the powerful centre of global finance. What is it like to work in these highly paid jobs?

What is your assessment of working on Wall St?

Read, Liquidated, Ch. 1,2,5.

9. **Week 10, Tutorial 9: The rise of insecure forms of work**

A significant proportion of the world’s working population now work under conditions of extreme insecurity. Key examples of these new forms of work (more accurately, the return of 19th Century forms of work organization) are: sweatshops, homework and day labor.
Debate why there has been this return to the past? What does the term ‘flexibility’ mean to those who run organizations and to those who are workers?


ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

Purpose of Assessment

There are a number of reasons for having assessable tasks as part of an academic program. The assessable tasks are designed to encourage you to explore and understand the subject more fully. The fact that we grade your work provides you an indication of how much you have achieved. Providing feedback on your work also serves as part of the learning process.

Assessment mechanism summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial exercises/activities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Students failing to attend at least X tutorials during the semester will receive a grade of FC (“Failed Component”) for the unit, unless they present adequate documentary evidence to justify their absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Survey Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Thursday, 1st September</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1 (essay)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Monday 3rd October</td>
<td>Students failing to complete this assessment task successfully and achieve a passing mark for it will receive a grade of FC (“Failed Component”) for the unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Note 1: Results may be subject to scaling and standardisation under faculty policy and are not necessarily the sum of the component parts.

Note 2: Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning outcomes as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the unit.

Assessment components

Submission of assignments

Electronic Submission ONLY

An electronic submission is required by the due date. Submit your assignment in an electronic format by going to the Uniprint web site www.uniprint.uwa.edu.au , then click on “Student Assignments” and follow the instructions.
If you have been granted additional time to complete an assignment or have missed the deadline for submission, you can submit your assignment in hard copy to the Student Centre. Please remember to attach an Assignment Cover sheet to the front of your assignment. You can download the relevant Assignment Cover sheet from the Business School Current Students web page http://www.business.uwa.edu.au/students/assessments

**FAILURE TO LODGE AN ASSIGNMENT THROUGH UNIPRINT BY THE DUE DATE WILL RESULT IN IT BEING JUDGED A LATE SUBMISSION AND CONSEQUENTLY BEING PENALISED. THERE ARE NO PAPER SUBMISSIONS FOR THIS UNIT.**

**Group Assignment: Work Experience Survey.**

**Due date:** Thursday 1st September, 4pm. Please submit to Uniprint, there is a link on Webct.

Your tutor will establish small sub-groups within your tutorial group (5 per group). Tasks:

1. Identify people in the group who have had work experience
2. Discuss and then summarize the survey results. What conclusions can you draw?
3. Reflect on key issues: work identity, power relations and where relevant, changes in the workplace (restructuring).
4. Interview one or more persons in your group with work experience
5. Produce a 1000 word analysis of the experience of identity and power.

**Essay**

**Due date:** Monday, 3rd October.

Word length: 2 000.

Select from one of the following topics:

1. Lambert’s new book, *Grounding Globalisation* engages the theory of Karl Polanyi on the relationship between markets and society to explore restructuring and its impact on persons, families and community in three fridge factories (LG in Korea; Electrolux in Australia; and Defy in South Africa). Write an essay, which attempts to critically assess the argument, focusing on one of the following aspects of the book:
   - The way in which Polanyi’s theory of the relationship between markets and society is critically assessed and applied to the empirical data in the book.
   - Compare the three factory case studies where are common survey was used in a manner that captures the similarities and the differences in the three factories and societies.
   - The book is an argument for a new approach to politics and trade unionism (local and global) and the final chapter outlines in skeletal form alternatives to the market model. Critically assess these ideas.

You may wish to reflect and assess these issues in relation to the growing literature on globalisation and labor.
2. Free markets secure freedom and human dignity through the promotion of an enterprise culture. Discuss.

3. Compare and contrast market personality and productive personality in the work of the social psychologist, Eric Fromm.

4. ‘Re-modeling power relations is critical to the development of workplace relations that facilitate the emergence of productive personality’. Discuss.

5. Analyse the impact of Scientific Management principles on the experience of work.

6. ‘Work restructuring in contemporary society raises serious ethical issues’. Discuss.

7. Discuss the culture of work on Wall St.

8. Discuss the experience of precarious work.

You should consider the following in preparing and in writing your essay:

- Are you addressing the question? Ask, ‘what is the central argument I am going to develop?’
- Is the essay well integrated? That is, does the central argument follow a logical sequence?
- Does the essay have a clear structure, with clearly delineated sections that link within the overall argument?
- Have I checked spelling and grammar? (Typographical errors?).

Use the Harvard system of referencing.

In preparing your essay, you should select the relevant readings, make extensive notes, and work out the central argument. Spend a great deal of time preparing your introduction.

**Exam.**

You will be required to select and write three essays in the exam. The unit aims to train you to critically engage the literature. Always assess the values and the assumptions of the authors of the texts you read. Never accept any proposition without questioning its assumptions, values and logic. My lecturing style adopts this approach of critical engagement. **Attending lectures diligently is therefore essential to mastering this unit and to developing a critical approach in the examination.**

The exam is 3 hours and 10 minutes.

**Student Guild**

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Website: http://www.guild.uwa.edu.au
Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities


Appeals against academic assessment

The University provides the opportunity for students to lodge an appeal against assessment results and/or progress status (refer http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/appeals ).